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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ENRG](#) [EDEV](#) [PINR](#) [PBTS](#) [TI](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: PRC-Tajikistan: China Displacing Russia, No  
Outstanding Border Issues Remain, Says Tajikistan  
Embassy (C-RE8-00054)

Classified by Political Minister Counselor Aubrey  
Carlson. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: According to a diplomat at the  
Tajikistan Embassy, Tajikistan increasingly tilts  
toward China, which it regards as the best hope in the  
region for a patron, supplanting Russia's historical  
role. PRC-funded economic development projects  
(primarily infrastructure investment) further  
commercial links and win over ordinary citizens, who  
suffer from an energy crisis and chronic  
underdevelopment. Chinese "soft power" and security-  
related training for Tajikistan officials also  
contribute to better ties. The Shanghai Cooperation  
Organization (SCO) fails to provide a framework for  
increasing regional economic activity, given its  
continuing focus on political and security matters.  
The SCO's lack of economic focus disappoints  
Tajikistan and contrasts with growing bilateral  
economic ties with China. A 2002 agreement with China  
ending the border dispute was comprehensive, and no  
outstanding border issues remain, the diplomat  
claimed. End Summary.

Russia Losing Influence to China  
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¶2. (C) Tajikistan Embassy Political Minister Counselor  
Likoev Mahmadali told PolOff February 15 that in the  
last few years China has shown a strong and growing  
interest in fostering Tajikistan's economic  
development, in contrast to Russia's almost exclusive  
focus on security in relations with the smaller  
countries of Central Asia. Mahmadali indicated  
Russia's approach appears self-serving to many in  
Tajikistan, who believe Russia takes for granted its  
historical ties with the country. China's focus on  
highly visible economic activity with smaller  
neighbors addresses the problems that ordinary  
Tajikistan citizens face. The Chinese strategy,  
Mahmadali said, has effectively ensured cooperation on  
security and increased China's long-term influence  
among ordinary citizens and leaders.

Infrastructure Investment  
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¶3. (C) Chinese infrastructure development projects in  
Tajikistan include highways, hydroelectric power and  
electricity transmission lines, for which private  
investment plays an important part. Mahmadali  
indicated that because this private investment is the  
result of official prodding from Beijing, Tajikistan  
regards it as a form of foreign assistance. In  
addition to upgrading Tajikistan's domestic power  
transmission system, Chinese investors plan a project

to connect the Tajikistan power grid to Afghanistan, according to Mahmadali. Also, China completed a road in 2006 that connects Dushanbe to Xinjiang through the Pamir Mountains, which not only develops the economy but facilitates other Chinese projects in Tajikistan.

#### "Soft Power" and Humanitarian Assistance

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¶4. (C) China's global "soft power" enterprise is manifested in Tajikistan through growing cultural and educational programs, law enforcement cooperation and scientific exchanges, Mahmadali said. China provided a USD 4-million grant to the Tajikistan counter-narcotics agency in Dushanbe, and has brought law enforcement officials to Beijing for counter-terrorism training. China also offered humanitarian aid during Tajikistan's recent energy crisis, specifically by repairing roads between the two countries, a pledge made despite China's own snowstorm crisis. China so far has not made good on this pledge, Mahmadali said, lauding U.S. assistance as the first on the scene and well-targeted to meet the needs of victims. He stated that one reason for the slow Chinese response is that Chinese assistance to Tajikistan is generally long-term in nature and not geared toward emergency response.

#### SCO Focus All Political/Security

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¶5. (C) Mahmadali said that Tajikistan's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is essential to its efforts to cultivate relations with

BEIJING 00000687 002 OF 002

¶6. (C) Mahmadali said that PRC-Tajikistan relations improved after the 2002 agreement to settle a long-standing territorial dispute. He volunteered that the agreement has been successfully implemented and no outstanding territorial claims remain on either side.

#### Bio Note

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¶7. (C) Mahmadali is an experienced diplomat but a newcomer to China. He spent his early career in the Soviet Foreign Ministry as an Arabist, including a tour at the Soviet embassy in Baghdad, where he claims to have interpreted for visiting Soviet officials in their meetings with Saddam Hussein. His current tour was preceded by an assignment as a Political Counselor at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Secretariat in Beijing.

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